

EVALUATION OF GENDER PARITY IN ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The study was to evaluate gender parity in students' engagement during Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) at university level. All prospective teachers (PTs) of university of Sargodha were the population of the study. A sample of 150 prospective teachers was selected through convenience sampling technique. A questionnaire based on five point likert scale was used for data collection. Its reliability was 0.87. Data was analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics.

INTRODUCTION

Students' academic engagement of prospective teachers (PTs) in planned and unplanned activities during higher education affects not only the learning process but also the personality development of the learner (PTs). According to Kuh, (2001), the effect of academically purposeful activities on the learning and personal development of male and female students cannot be ignored in higher education. Kim, Andrew, & Carr (2004) described that competencies required for the classroom deal with the "diverse learners" male and female students in TEPs as well as provide base for the future practices.

The major task of a teacher in an educational organization is teaching and effect of pre-service teacher training on future teaching cannot be ignored as Andrew, Cobb & Giampietro, (2005) explained that the innovative teaching is a blended concept of the teachers' personality traits, abilities, teaching methodologies, information about the subject, and behavior towards equality in the classroom. All these factors have effects on achievement with respect to particular course objectives. Luseno, (2001) found that

objectives of TEPs can only be achieved to foster students' engagement with their relevant needs and involve male and female PTs in the required activities. Another study of Rao and Rao, (2005) stressed that in 21st century teacher education programs must engage pupil teachers in knowledge, skills and behavior to work effectively in diverse environment with both male and female students.

The expert opinions regarding TEPs in previous 'Educational Policies of Pakistan' like Commission (1959), National Education Policy (1979), National Education Policy (1998), National Education Policy (2009) stressed that quality of teachers depends upon the quality of teacher training programs. The quality of TEPs needs to be improved and match with the upcoming trends in education (Shami, 2010).

Different Universities of Pakistan have designed various TEPs. The effect of gender biases are perceived in TEPs results in the form of low engagement, low motivation, and low satisfaction of PTs. As an instructor he/she should keep in view these negative effects of gender biases to complete the contents and achieve the objectives of the programs through delivering innovative contents to prospective teachers during TEPs (Akhtar, 2012).

Importance of gender related aspects in the TEPs were described by Deemer, & Hanich, (2005) as the gender related issues guide instructor to arrange their classrooms on gender basis for inspiring pupils and applying psychological principles in teaching. So it can be said that gender parity plays an important role in engaging PTs in TEPs.

There is a relationship among the capabilities of teacher's trainers and future performance of PTs in the classroom. Teachers are to be aware of content considerations, design of various types of classroom evaluations and well thought-out about learners' perception during TEP (Darling, 2000). The study of Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, (2001) stresses gender parity and suggests for provision of assignment material and other necessities to the prospective teachers in the departments.

An empirical research was conducted by Sultan & Lazim (2011) on 'gender Studies in teacher education' and concluded that gender plays an important role in learning. Another study was conducted by Akhtar (2012) entitled 'Gender Inequality in Teacher Education Programs'. He concluded that causes of inequality in teaching profession are low salary and low social status. He also suggested that there is a need to enhance social and economic status of the teachers to ensure the gender equality in TEPs. A study entitled "Evaluating Courses: an examination of the impact of student gender" has been conducted by Darby (2006). The researcher concluded that gender variation is found in programs evaluation and gender variations are based on the type of assessment during the course done by the trainers. Quantitative and descriptive study of Fatima (2010) recommended that required changes in the engagement of PTs like group discussion, role playing activities, and seminar must be introduced in different teacher education programs.

Georgescu, (2011) suggested guidelines for gender parity like a teacher must be conscious about gender specific socially constructed roles and preferences in the classroom equality, instructors keep up trust in the classroom regarding gender parity to learn from each other (e.g. group discussion of male and female students), to develop learner's skills of learning to participate in classroom activities (e.g. role playing, presentation etc), work together with gender parity during TEP and to engage PTs in the advance activities that promotes gender equality e.g. mutual discussion.

The quality of Teacher education Programs (TEP) effects on future practices of the prospective teachers (PTs) in the classroom. Gender parities during TEP enable both male and female PTs to engage in academic activities (e.g role playing, assignments etc) Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, (2001). Gender parity enhances excellence of TEP at university level. So the perception of PTs about gender parity in academic engagement of PTs in TEP can affects their performance. Therefore, the study was designed to evaluate gender parity in academic engagement of PTs in TEPs.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study were to:

- Investigate the perception of prospective teachers about gender parity in students 'engagement' during teacher education programs.
- Compare male and female perception about gender parity in students 'engagement' during teacher education programs.

The findings of the study would assist teacher educators to design the lessons with reference to gender parity in students 'engagement'. Moreover, the evaluators of the teacher educators may consider the aspect of gender parity in performance assessment.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted to find out the perception of the prospective teachers (PTs). All the PTs enrolled in Teacher Education Programs i.e. BS-Education, B. Ed, M.A. Education at Department of Education, University of Sargodha were included in the population. The sample of 150 PTs consisting 50 students from each program was conveniently selected from the population.

A scale was developed for the evaluation of gender parity in students 'engagement' during TEP by following (Kirkpatrick, 2010) model of evaluation. The first level in Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation is "Reaction" according to this model reaction means the overall attitude towards different components of the program such as presentations, assignments and other academic activities during TEPs (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Hence in the development of instrument the items were developed considering the reaction of PTs towards their academic engagement during TEP with reference to gender parity where reaction was considered as attitude towards experiences in the program.

RESULTS

To evaluate gender parity in TEP responses of PTs towards engagement in the classroom activities during the TEP data were collected for the factors; group activities, assignments, presentations, role playing activities, classroom environment, by trainer treatment, developing professionalism among prospective teachers.

Table 1 depicts the cumulative views of prospective teachers PTs on gender parity about their academic engagement in the classroom activities during TEP. The analysis of data reflected divided opinion regarding encouragement of male students as compared to females in 'group activities' as 44% participants disagreed or strongly disagreed whereas substantial proportion 39% PTs agreed and 17% were undecided.

According to 73% respondents 'assignments' were equally compulsory for both male and female students. In response of a question regarding easy topics of presentations for male than female PTs, 70% students disagreed with it; whereas only 25% agreed. It shows gender parity in assigning the presentations topics. On response to the statement about 'preference of male PTs about role playing activities than females' 62% students disagreed whereas 24% students agreed with the statement and 14% were undecided. According to 77% students' classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female students whereas only 15% students disagreed with the statement. The statement, 'Academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program' gained 70% agreement; similarly, 70% students agreed that equal treatment with both male and female students is maintained. The responses of students about the statement 'involvement of female student was more in learning activities than male, were 72% in agreement, while only 24% students disagreed and 4% were undecided. Most of the students (68%) agreed that female student were more concerned with what was going on during the program rather than male students, while 24% disagreed and 8% students were undecided. Sixty two (62%) respondents agreed that male students took more interest in the program than females whereas 33% students disagreed with the statement and only 5% were undecided. According to 72% students, the program helped both male and female students to develop professionalism.

The Table 2 represents the comparative views of male and female PTs regarding engagement in TEP. When opinions about 'group activities' were compared 50% of male and 30% female were of the opinion that participation of males in group activities was encouraged in TEP whereas 47% females and 38% males disagreed with it. The comparison between gender wise opinions about the statement 'Assignments were equally compulsory for both male and female students' shows that 71% of male and 74% female PTs agreed with it.

The comparison of responses of male and female PTs regarding 'Female students' presentations on different topics were easy than males' during TEP showed no differences as 49% of male and 50% female disagreed with the statement. About the statement of 'Role playing activities' were preferred for male rather than females.' 37% males and 45% females PTs disagreed with the statement, whereas 35% male and 32% female disagreed with the statement. In the response of statement, 'The classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female students' 62% of male and 70% female PTs agreed on gender parity during TEP. Female responses were comparatively higher on rating gender parity in classroom environment in TEP. The differences among respondents regarding academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program' revealed that 72% of males and 67% females agreed that learning activities covered both male and female experiences.

When compared, the male and female responses about the statement 'This program maintained my interest due to equal treatment with both male and female students' indicated equal treatment to maintain learners' interest as 60% males and 60% female PTs were in favor. There appeared difference in males and females opinions when compared about 'Involvement of female students was more in learning activities than male students' as (38%) male and a majority of females 54% agreed with the statement. The gender wise comparison of responses about the statement 'Female student were more concerned with

what was going on during the program rather than male students', 38% male and 53% female agreed with the bias in student's concern. The dissimilarity in the views on the subject of 'Male students took more interest in the program than females' shows that 40% male and 45% female students disagreed with the statement but 28% PTs were uncertain. The gender wise comparison of opinions about the statement 'This program helped both male and female students to develop professionalism' reflected that 78% male and 70% females agreed that TEP helped PTs equally in developing professionalism.

Table 3 expresses the comparison of male and female perception about reaction towards engagement with reference to gender parity in TEP. There was no significant difference in the views of male and females PTs about 'group activities' as the mean of (Male=3.03 and Female=2.75) and t -value=1.29 and p -value=0.197>0.05.

Comparing views of male and female about 'assignments equally compulsory for both male and female students' as the basis of t -value=0.46 and p -value=0.64>0.05, no statistically significant difference was found in the perception of male and female students (Male=4.00 and Female=4.08). It can be said that assignments were equally compulsory for both male and female PTs during TEP. There was no significance difference between mean scores of male and female PTs regarding 'female students' presentations' topics were easy than males' indicate no statistically significant difference as t -value = 0.190 and p -value=0.849>0.05; where mean scores of male and female were 2.61 and 2.64 respectively. Hence no gender bias was observed in classroom presentations. In the responses about the statement "Role playing activities were preferred for male rather than females", there was no significant difference between the mean scores of male and female PTs (mean of male=2.86 and female=2.83) as t -value =0.147 along with p -value= 0.883>0.05. Hence there was gender parity in role playing activities. The differences among mean scores regarding "The classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female student" no statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of male and female PTs (mean of male=3.76 and mean of female=3.85) as t -value = 0.489 with p -value = 0.619>0.05. Hence the participants of training program observed no gender bias in classroom environment.

On asking about the "Academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program" no statistically significant difference was found between mean scores of male and female PTs (mean of male=3.88 and mean of female=3.73) as t -value = 0.766 with p -value = 0.445>0.05. So there was gender parity in academic engagement.

Comparing of mean scores of male and female PTs regarding statement 'TEP maintained interest of both male and female students' with the means of (Male=3.57 and Female=3.61) no statistically significant differences was found as t -value was 0.209 and p -value = 0.834>0.05.

The comparison of views about the statement "Involvement of female student was more in learning activities than male students" showed statistically significant difference in mean scores of male=3.05 and female=3.50 as indicated by t -value = 2.275 and p -value = 0.024<0.05. The greater mean score of female PTs show that in the opinion of female students female students were more involved in learning activities than males.

There was statistically significant difference between the perceptions of male (mean score=2.98) and female (mean score = 3.54) PTs regarding the statement "Female student

were more concerned with what was going on during the programs rather than male students” as indicated by $t\text{-value}=3.02$ and $p\text{-value}=0.003>.05$.

The comparison of perceptions of males and female PTs mean scores (mean score of male=2.81 and mean score of female=2.74) about the statement that “Male students took more interest in the programs than females” showed no statistically significant difference as indicated by $t\text{-value} = 0.34$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.732>.05$. Hence participants observed gender parity in students interest. Comparing the mean scores of male and female PTs perception (mean score of males=3.89 and females=3.85) regarding 'developing professionalism' no statistically significant difference was found as expressed by $t\text{-value} = 0.232$ with $p\text{-value} = 0.817 > 0.05$. It shows that there was gender parity in developing professionalism during TEP.

The overall perception of PTs regarding reaction towards their 'engagement in teacher education program' exhibit that there were gender parity in group activities, assignments, presentations, role playing activities, classroom environment, learning experiences, equal treatment of trainer and developing professionalism. The observations of PTs in TEP concerning more involvement of female PTs in learning activities, male interest and concern of female PTs in classroom activities showed bias.

Overall views of PTs about gender parity in TEPs in the factor academic engagement as $t=-.38$ and $P=.698>.05$ illustrated that the differences in cumulative responses were not statistically significant and in the factors of the academic engagement, so it was reflected that there were gender parity in academic engagement during TEP.

CONCLUSION

The results shows that the perception of PTs regarding reaction towards 'engagement in teacher education program' revealed that there is gender parity in group activities, assignments, presentations, role playing activities, classroom environment, learning experiences, equal treatment of trainer and developing professionalism. The observations of PTs in TEP concerning more involvement of female PTs in learning activities and interest and concern of female PTs in classroom activities showed difference between male and females but that was minute. Thus the perception of PTs depicts gender parity regarding engagement of PTs during TEP.

DISCUSSION

The data analysis concluded that there was gender parity in academic engagement in TEP at university level. As the studies of Tinklin, Croxford, Ducklin, & Frame, (2001) confirmed this with different context but conclude gender parity in academic engagement. The results of the study are also according to the results of studies conducted by Darby, (2006), Fatima, (2010), Sultan & Lazim, (2011), and Akhtar, (2012).

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APPENDIX

Table – 1: Perception of Prospective Teachers (PTs) about Engagement in Teacher Training Programs

| No. | Aspects of program | SD | D | SD+D | N | A | SA | A+SA |
|-----|--------------------------------|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|----|------|
| 1 | Participation of male in group | 17% | 27% | 44% | 17% | 30% | 9% | 39% |

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | activities was encouraged rather than female students. | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Assignments were equally compulsory for both male and female students. | 3% | 9% | 12% | 15% | 25% | 48% | 73% |
| 3 | Female students' presentations on different topics were easy than males. | 30% | 40% | 70% | 5% | 16% | 9% | 25% |
| 4 | Role playing activities were preferred for male rather than females. | 24% | 38% | 62% | 14% | 17% | 7% | 24% |
| 5 | The classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female students. | 3% | 12% | 15% | 8% | 34% | 43% | 77% |
| 6 | Academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program. | 4% | 15% | 19% | 11% | 37% | 33% | 70% |
| 7 | This program maintained my interest due to equal treatment with both male and female students. | 5% | 15% | 20% | 10% | 41% | 29% | 70% |
| 8 | Involvement of female student was more in learning activities than male students. | 7% | 17% | 24% | 4% | 38% | 34% | 72% |
| 9 | Female student were more concerned with what was going on during the program rather than male students. | 7% | 17% | 24% | 8% | 37% | 31% | 68% |
| 10 | Male students took more interest in the program than females. | 14% | 19% | 33% | 5% | 28% | 34% | 62% |
| 11 | This program helped both male and female students to develop professionalism. | 3% | 10% | 13% | 14% | 41% | 31% | 72% |

Table – 2: *Gender wise Reaction of Prospective Teachers about Engagement in TEP*

| Q. No. | Statement | Groups | SD+D (f)% | Undecided (f) | SA+A (f)% | Total |
|--------|---|--------|--------------|------------------|--------------|-------|
| 1. | Participation of male in group activities was encouraged rather than female students. | Male | (23)38% | 6 | (30)50% | 59 |
| | | Female | (43)47% | 20 | (28)30% | 91 |
| 2. | Assignments were equally compulsory for both male and female students. | Male | (9)15% | 8 | (42)71% | 59 |
| | | Female | (10)11% | 13 | (68)74% | 91 |
| 3. | Female students' presentations on different topics were easy than males. | Male | (28)49% | 17 | (12)22% | 59 |
| | | Female | (46)50% | 21 | (24)26% | 91 |
| 4. | Role playing activities were preferred for male rather than females. | Male | (22)37% | 16 | (21)35% | 59 |
| | | Female | (41)45% | 20 | (30)32% | 91 |

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|-----|---|--------|---------|----|---------|----|
| 5. | The classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female students. | Male | (11)18% | 11 | (37)62% | 59 |
| | | Female | (12)13% | 15 | (34)70% | 91 |
| 6. | Academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program. | Male | (12)15% | 7 | (24)72% | 59 |
| | | Female | (19)20% | 11 | (31)67% | 91 |
| 7. | This program maintained my interest due to equal treatment with both male and female students. | Male | (10)16% | 14 | (24)60% | 59 |
| | | Female | (19)20% | 18 | (28)60% | 91 |
| 8. | Involvement of female student was more in learning activities than male students. | Male | (21)35% | 15 | (16)38% | 59 |
| | | Female | (21)23% | 20 | (28)54% | 91 |
| 9. | Female student were more concerned with what was going on during the program rather than male students. | Male | (22)37% | 14 | (18)38% | 59 |
| | | Female | (14)15% | 28 | (30)53% | 91 |
| 10. | Male students took more interest in the program than females. | Male | (24)40% | 18 | (12)32% | 59 |
| | | Female | (41)45% | 25 | (20)28% | 91 |
| 11. | This program helped both male and female students to develop professionalism. | Male | (8)13% | 5 | (29)78% | 59 |
| | | Female | (11)13% | 16 | (33)70% | 91 |

Table – 3: Comparison of Male and Female Perception about Reaction Towards Engagement with Reference to Gender Parity in Teacher Education Programs

| No. | Statement | Gender | N | Mean | SD | t-value | Sig. (P-value) |
|-----|--|--------|----|------|-------|---------|----------------|
| 1. | Participation of male in group activities was encouraged rather than female students. | Male | 59 | 3.03 | 1.29 | 1.29 | .197 |
| | | Female | 91 | 2.75 | 1.22 | | |
| 2. | Assignments were equally compulsory for both male and female students. | Male | 59 | 4.00 | 1.14 | -0.46 | .646 |
| | | Female | 91 | 4.08 | 1.14 | | |
| 3. | Female students' presentations on different topics were easy than males. | Male | 59 | 2.61 | 1.16 | -0.19 | .849 |
| | | Female | 91 | 2.64 | 1.26 | | |
| 4. | Role playing activities were preferred for male rather than females. | Male | 59 | 2.86 | 1.22 | 0.14 | .883 |
| | | Female | 91 | 2.83 | 1.137 | | |
| 5. | The classroom environment was equally favorable for both male and female student. | Male | 59 | 3.76 | 1.15 | -0.49 | .619 |
| | | Female | 91 | 3.85 | 1.11 | | |
| 6. | Academic engagement covered both male and female experiences during teacher education program. | Male | 59 | 3.88 | 1.06 | 0.76 | .445 |
| | | Female | 91 | 3.73 | 1.22 | | |
| 7. | This program maintained my interest due to equal treatment with both | male | 59 | 3.57 | 1.05 | -0.20 | .834 |
| | | female | 91 | 3.61 | 1.20 | | |

